TRAIN IN TUCSON

ARCHERS

WORLD CLASS
Tucson is an archery powerhouse in part because it is home to Precision Shooting Equipment (PSE), the largest privately-owned bow manufacturer in the world. PSE is located in Tucson, Arizona, just minutes from the Santa Catalina Mountains and the desert. The company is known for its high-quality bows, arrows, and accessories, and it is a leader in the archery industry.

The town of Tucson is home to several archery-related businesses, including PSE, which is located on the outskirts of the city. PSE produces a wide range of archery equipment, including arrows, bow sights, and other accessories.

The archery industry is a major contributor to the local economy, and it is a favorite activity for many residents and visitors. The area is known for its beautiful outdoor scenery, which makes it an ideal place for archery.

In addition to PSE, there are several other archery-related businesses in the area, including archery ranges, retail stores, and archery schools. The community is proud of its archery heritage, and it is a popular destination for archery enthusiasts from around the world.
In addition to his local students, several top-notch archers, including some from outside the country, travel to Tucson several times a year to train with him.

"Kirillov is just really good with the kids, and I'm amazed that he can go from the Olympics, and then come back here and do the beginner class," comments Teresa Huff, the mother of national junior champion Maggie Huff.

"To find somebody of his class in Tucson is just an incredible stroke of luck for us," adds local archer Diane Schuur, who began taking lessons from Kirillov a year ago.

"Archery is a sport that anyone — with a little determination and good coaching — can excel at, and so it's really good for building self-esteem," comments Jon Shepley, marketing director at PSE and Turner Shepley's son. "We make equipment for [ages] 8 to 80...and older people can do it because it's not physically taxing," he adds. The local Tucson Senior Olympics games have had as many as 80 archers competing in age classes ranging from 50 to 80 and over.

Archery is also an ideal sport for many disabled athletes. There were 96 archers from 37 countries at this summer's Paralympics games. Kids taking lessons at PSE start as young as 8, although the minimum criterion is not age, but the ability to unashamedly follow the safety rules.

The bow used in the beginner class at PSE is not a pop. It is the PSE entry-level recurve, the Optima. The ends of recurve bows curve out away from the archer, adding power to the shot. This type of bow first appeared around 2000 B.C. The recurve is the only type of bow allowed in the Olympic games.

These days, most bows are made up of several layers of different material glued together. "Composite" bows date back as least 2320 B.C., although fiberglass were made of wood, horn and sinew. The compressible horn on the inside surface of the bow, helped push the drawn bow back to its original position, while the stretchy sinew on the outside surface contracted to pull the bow back into shape. Today's composite materials are epoxy resin and fiberglass, but they serve the same objectives.

What is truly new in bow technology is the compound bow, a radically different design that uses a series of pulleys and cables to greatly increase the power and accuracy of the shot. Invented in 1966, the compound bow has revolutionized the world of bow hunting; it is much easier to learn, rests in much more accurate shots and has greater kinetic power. The steady popularity of bow hunting has fueled interest in archery and has also contributed to the success of PSE.

Beginners at PSE are given recurve bows because to achieve accuracy with a recurve requires good form, and good form is the most important element of success with any type of bow. "It's so important to learn the basics from a person who knows archery, because the form is critical for archery," explains Kirillov.

Knowing that Kirillov is a former Soviet national coach, you might expect to find him demanding, strict and dictatorial, or impatient with unskilled archers. Nothing could be further from the truth: He is easygoing, friendly and encouraging. "One of the big things is that he doesn't push the kids," comments Teresa Huff. "If you want to do it for fun, that's fine with him, but he does have these few kids [whose] ambition is a little bit more; and...as long as they're willing to do the work, he's willing to help, but you have to show him you're willing to do the work, which is only fair."

Maggie Huff, a slender, blond 16-year-old, is one of the top junior archers in the United States. "It's a lot of fun. You get to meet a lot of cool people; you get to travel a lot," says Maggie about her decision to pursue archery. "It can be frustrating at times, but, once you actually get it right, it's — it's really cool."

Teresa, Maggie's mother, has noticed a change in her daughter since she took up archery. "Until she gets to know people; she can be very quiet and reserved...but now that she's in it and has the experience of the international tournaments and the world championships...she seems like a more confident person."
Archery can benefit kids in other ways, too. "Lots of parents told me that kids who take the archery class are regularly doing much better at school, because they learn how to focus; they learn how to be patient; they learn how to be disciplined," says Kiellors. There are many people who don't enjoy team sports, who relish performing solo with the feeling of individual achievement. Shipley points to another advantage of archery. "There are tens of thousands of kids injured every year in high-school sports, and there's never been a documented injury of a kid shooting a bow and arrow at school."

Another top junior archer in Tucson is the tall, red-headed Ryan Davis, 14, who first encountered archery as a Cub Scout gathering on Mount Lemmon. Both Maggie and Ryan were selected for the U.S. junior team and traveled to Great Britain for the "Worlds," an international competition for juniors held every two years. "It was a blast. It was really awesome," the usually taciturn Ryan says of the Worlds.

PSE and its Shooters School are not the only archery games in town. Tucson is home to other archery ranges, including an outdoor range near the Arizona Sonora Desert Museum, and equipment can be purchased at The Archery Center on East Speedway Boulevard, as well as at the PSE Pro Shop. Atarcher Tucson archery club, the Desert Destroyers, sponsors classes in Junior Olympic archery development on Saturday mornings, coached by Lawrence Brady, an experienced archery coach.

Archery can be performed well at almost any age. Janet Dykman, three-time Olympian and a member of this summer's U.S. Olympic archery team, is old enough, or age 50, to qualify for the Senior Olympics.

People watching an archery competition for the first time often find it different from what they expected. Instead of wooden bows and arrows, materials such as magnesium, syntactic foam, Kevlar, carbon, fiberglass and aluminum dominate. At first glance you can scarcely make out the basic shape of the bow, because it is bristling with attachments: sights, clickers and stabilizing rods stick out all over the place. However, when you remove all the attachments, the recurve bow is the same basic shape that has been used for thousands of years, and it is shot in the same manner.

In fact, if you remove all the attachments from a recurve, you can compete in the "barebow" division at many archery tournaments. Some take the "pariaist" approach even further, constructing their own bows and arrows by hand using historical materials and methods from many cultures, including techniques borrowed from American Indian traditions. Some are serious archers, using their handcrafted bows to hunt game, while others are recreational archers. And then, of course, there are the Lord of the Rings movies, which have noticeably raised archery's profile the world over and not just among the young.

Although the United States leads the world in bow manufacturing, and does well in compound target archery, it is not known as an archery powerhouse in the Olympics. In this past summer's Olympics, South Korean archers took home four medals (three gold, one silver), Taiwan two, and one medal each

was won by China, the Ukraine, Australia, Japan, Italy and Great Britain.

Best help is on the way. The national Junior Olympic Archery Development (JOAD) program was formed to promote the development of Olympic archers by focusing on the young (the youngest age division is up to and including age 8), and PSE sponsors a very active JOAD club. The emergence of Jenny Nichols (coached by Kiellors), who had the third-highest score at the Olympics among the U.S. men and women combined, and is only 23, hints that it is just a matter of time until the United States rises significantly in the international standings.

Whether it's seeking Olympic glory, dressing up as a medieval lady or lord, bagging that trophy buck, or recreating indigenous bows and arrows, the romance and mysterious appeal of archery lives on. DL

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